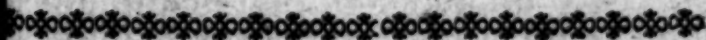


A

S E R M O N,

On PROVERBS xxiii. 19.

Preached after the Primary Visitation of
John, Lord Bishop of *Durham*.



An ea

S

Preac

By

Acts
Jerusalem
of God
coming
the Hol
of them,
Lord Je
and they



ON PROCEEDING

An earnest Exhortation to young Persons lately
confirmed :

2.

I N A

S E R M O N,

On PROVERBS xxiii. 19.

Preached after the Primary Visitation of
John, Lord Bishop of Durham.

By WILLIAM NOWELL, M. A.
Rector of Wolsingham.

Acts vii. 14. *But when the Apostles, which were in Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who coming down prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, (for as yet he had fallen upon none of them, only they had been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus); then they put their Hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

N E W C A S T L E:

Printed by T. SLACK, 1774.

1871

125

SE E R M N

ON PAPER 2517049

John, Arch Bishop of Cambrai.

John, Earl of Sandwich.

J. A. M. LEEWON HALLIOWAY

and finally to the 20th century.

As they received the Holy Ghost.

M E W C A S T L E

Printed by T. S. A. C. K. 1774.

S E R M O N,

P R O V E R B S xxiii. 19.

*Hear thou, my son, and be wise ; and guide
thou thine heart in the way.*

“**V**AIN man, says Zophar to Job, would be
“ wise, tho’ man be born like a wild ass’s
“ colt !”—There is a mixture of truth and
satire in this reflection, which alludes both
to the infirmity and folly of human nature. ’Tis true,
there is in us an ambition to attain knowledge, and
yet here it is charged as a piece of foolish presumption
in such a creature as man to endeavour after it. Not
the wildest inhabitant of the desert brings its offspring
into the world in a more helpless or more ignorant state
than the children of men are found in at their birth :
And hence, all pretensions to knowledge may seem ridic-
ulous from such mean beginnings. He therefore
ascribes our passion for wisdom, to the merevanity of our
hearts—“ Vain man would be wise.” As if he had
said, “ What hast thou to do with wisdom, thou child
“ of ignorance : Thou that wert born yesterday, and
“ must die to-morrow ; whose life is but a span long,
“ and yet begins in the folly of childhood, and termi-
“ nates in the no less folly of old age, thy second child-
“ hood ! In the mean time thy faculties open by slow de-
“ grees, and thy understanding proceeds toward truth
“ with painful steps—“ *Line upon line, line upon line, pre-
“ cept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little, and
“ there a little,*” are the tedious methods by which the
natural

“ natural darkness of thy mind is in any measure enlightened. What arrogance then, what vanity is this, that thou should’st set thyself to seek after wisdom, or lift up thy voice for understanding ?”

And very just is this rebuke, when applied to many who aspired to the title of *wise men* among the antients, in whom *vanity* appears to have been the predominant and ruling passion. As * one of the most eminent amongst them acknowledges of his brethren ; “ They, says he, among the philosophers who have written books on wisdom, have done it out of a spirit of *vanity* ; and even where they decry *vain glory*, they are thereby, and in the very same books, labouring to advance their *own glory*.” On these, therefore, the pointed satire falls with it’s keenest edge. *Vain men !*—And again, when men in pursuit of wisdom know no bounds, but mix heaven and earth, this world and the next, and presume within the narrow circle of human understanding, to inclose the infinite attributes of the incomprehensible God, and to find out the Almighty unto perfection ; when they will needs scan all the ways of providence, and measure all God’s doings by the standard of their own weak and feeble judgments ; boldly condemning whatever does not lie level to their low apprehensions ; when, in short, they will dispute God’s ways, but not believe his word ; and deny those dispensations which are too deep for the short line of their reason to fathom.—This is a *vanity* justly to be derided and exploded.

And, yet notwithstanding these severe checks, which may serve to humble our pride, a wisdom nevertheless there is, which is not only within our reach, but which it is our most bounden duty to labour after, and to attain. The whole book of *Proverbs* is, as it were, a system of this wisdom, taught to the sons of men by no less a person than King Solomon himself, so eminent for his superior wisdom. In the beginning of the work, he introduces his undertaking with the noblest encomium of the wisdom he would recommend. “ Happy, says he,

* Cicero.

“ he,
“ get
“ bet
“ the
“ rub
“ be
“ rig
“ He
“ are
“ Of
study
most
“ to g
ledge
says
And,
“ my
“ wa
In
addre
my e
part o
may
just m
by th
No
excell
arts a
oppor
in ; b
which
yourf
few w
of Go
from
he, b
keep
“ Th
wisdo

“ he, is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that
 “ getteth understanding ; for the merchandize of it is
 “ better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain
 “ thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than
 “ rubies ; and all the things thou canst desire are not to
 “ be compared unto her. Length of days is in her
 “ right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour :
 “ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths
 “ are peace.”

Of this wisdom we cannot be too ambitious ; to the
 study of it *Solomon* presses and encourages us by the
 most inviting motives : He declares it the only way
 “ to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man know-
 ledge and discretion : It shall be an ornament of grace,
 says he, unto thy head, and chains about thy neck :
 And, therefore, as he urges in my text, “ *Hear thou,*
 “ *my son, and be wise, and guide thou thine heart in the*
 “ *way.*”

In pursuance of this call to wisdom, so affectionately
 addressed to us, by the inspired instructor, it shall be
 my endeavour in this discourse, to invite the younger
 part of this assembly to listen to his admonitions, which
 may so seasonably fall in with the serious resolutions
 just made by many of them, at their late confirmation
 by the Bishop.

Now, the wisdom thus extolled, and of which such
 excellent things are spoken, is not a skill in abstruse
 arts and sciences, of which but few are capable or have
 opportunities of studying, or are very nearly interested
 in ; but it is a wisdom within every one's reach, and
 which it concerns you above all things else to possess
 yourselves of. *Solomon* himself defines its nature in a
 few words, and tells you wherein it consists : *The fear*
of God, says he, *is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart*
from evil is understanding : And else where *let us*, says
 he, *hear the conclusion of the whole matter ; fear God and*
keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

The fear of God therefore, is what *Solomon* means by
 wisdom, and by the fear of God, you are to understand

nothing less than *religion* in general so called, because the fear of *God* is not only itself a principal part of true religion, but also, because where this principle, a true fear of *God*, rules in the heart, it will lead to the exercise of all other parts of true religion.

You are called then, and invited in my text, to a diligent regard to religion, as the most valuable wisdom, as the guide of your youth, and your surest director thro' all the mazes of the world you are entering into. I heartily wish it was in the power of any words I can use to persuade you to it. I shall attempt no other method for this purpose here in publick, than that in which I have already spoken to most of you in private, viz :

1st, To remind you of your baptismal vow and engagement, with a short explanation of the parts of it; And then

2^{dly}, Inculcate the performance of it, from your own voluntary promise, now made by you before the bishop.

3^{dly}, Concluding with a few rules of advice, that may be of service for your direction therein.

1st, At the time of your baptism, you were infants incapable of judging or acting for yourselves; but not therefore incapable of being entered into covenant with *God*, as is evident from hence, that under the law, *God* received the children of the *Jews* into covenant at eight days old, as he had done the descendants of *Abraham* before the law, by the ordinance of circumcision: And as baptism in the gospel succeeds circumcision under the law, and our Saviour has no where forbidden children to partake of it, but on the contrary, commanded us to *suffer the little children to come unto him*, it is your christian birth-right to be baptised as soon as conveniently may be, after you are born; and by that sacrament, to be admitted into covenant with *God Almighty*, on the terms of the gospel.

Now, in all covenants, each contracting party lays himself under an obligation to perform something towards the other: In the christian covenant, *God Al-*
mighty

mighty
Christ,
heaven
church,
privileg
tion to
er of A
ors of
Christ,
The
covenan
the mo
ture:
nourish
to us th
put us,
fatherly
kindne
and wh
trance
ness, in
that yo
advanta
On t
conside
be bo
viz:—
wicked
ed to i
vanitie
irregul
—2d,
and liv
doctrin
and fin
God's h
same a
ment n
of wh
them i

mighty stipulates and agrees to accept you as *members of Christ, as children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven: Members of Christ*, means members of his church, which is his body, and partakers of all the privileges belonging to it: *Children of God*, in opposition to *children of wrath*, in which every son and daughter of Adam is born thro' his original sin: And *inheritors of the kingdom of God*, thro' the merits of *Jesus Christ*, who has purchased that eternal salvation for us.

These are the privileges all baptised christians are by covenant entitled to, and privileges certainly they are the most advantageous and honourable to human nature: They contain all that is requisite to produce and nourish a principle of holiness within us: They ensure to us the blessings of the christian redemption: They put us, as it were, into *God's family*, and engage his fatherly care and protection, his unbounded love and kindness for us, in our passage thro' this mortal life; and when that shall be over, they open to us an entrance into a never failing state of glory and happiness, in his own divine presence. And, what is there that you can think of, or desire, in comparison of these advantages?

On the other hand it was promised for you, that in consideration of these high privileges, you should also be bound to the performance of these three things, viz:—1st, That you should renounce all manner of wickedness; abhor and abstain from it, whether tempted to it by the suggestions of the Devil, allured by the vanities of the world you live in, or seduced by the irregular lust and passions of your own corrupt nature.—2d, In the next place, that you should with a hearty and lively faith, embrace all the articles of the christian doctrine; and lastly, that you should shew the truth and sincerity of your faith by your works, in keeping *God's holy will and commandments*, and walking in the same all the days of your life. This was the agreement made on your part. On the two latter branches of which, I shall be a little more particular to fix them more deeply in your minds.

And first, of *faith*. The necessary articles of your christian faith are summed up in the *creed*, or what you call the *belief*. You believe them, because they are taught in the holy scriptures by *Christ*, and his Apostles, who could neither be deceived themselves, nor teach you any thing but what is both true, and of great importance for you to believe: The sum and substance of your belief is comprized in these three particulars.

1. That you believe in one *God*, the maker of heaven and earth, and tho', because he is a spirit, you do not see this glorious Being with your bodily eyes, yet he is not only revealed to your faith in the volume of the scriptures, but displays himself to your understanding thro' all the volume of nature. Every thing about you, the sun, the moon, and the stars, the earth and all its productions for use and ornament, every animal, and every object that meets your senses, testify not only to the being, but to the providence of an all-wise, all-powerful, beneficent creator and disposer of all things. You can give no other account of your own original and continuance in life; nor of any of the comforts and conveniences you enjoy, but to ascribe them to his liberal and gracious hand, who made us all, and filleth all things living with plenteousness. But because even Heathen nations believe in a creator of the world, to distinguish yourselves as christians, your next article is to believe in *Jesus Christ*; "God the son, who redeemed you and all mankind." The particulars of whose birth, life, preaching, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension and intercession, all most wonderful! you ought to acquaint yourselves most exactly withal, by a constant and careful reading of the New Testament, of which I was greatly concerned to see how ignorant many of you were upon examination. The third article of your christian faith, is to believe in the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth you, "and all the elect people of God;" that is, all christian people. That he is the author of all holiness in you, and that without his special grace assisting, it is not in your power to move and advance in the ways of piety and religion.

of you. Thus you see, every time you repeat the creed, which perhaps you do often, without thinking or attending to the sense and meaning of it) you profess your faith in the holy Trinity, three persons in the one Godhead, according to the command of our blessed Lord to his disciples, "*Go ye into all nations, and baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"

To these great and main articles are further subjoined, your acknowledgement of "the holy Catholick church," and "the communion of saints;" that is, an affectionate relation and fellowship ever subsisting between all true christians amongst themselves, and with *Christ* their head, "the forgiveness of sins," viz.—thro' the merits of *Christ* on your true repentance: "The resurrection" of our bodies out of the grave, at the last day, and their re-union with our souls, in order to enter upon what is the last article of your belief, a life everlasting. Here you see, life is not everlasting, but of very short and uncertain continuance: You see old persons drop into the grave thro' mere weakness of nature, and the strong and middle aged often cut off in their full strength and vigour; and even many of those who like yourselves were young and lively, and standing as it were on the threshold or entrance of life, yet like early bloom nipped with an untimely blast, suddenly fading away before they came to be full blown: So that there is no reliance upon this life, at any stage or period of it. But then, your christian belief assures you of a better and more endearing life to come; and that tho' you die to this world, it is to live in another, the good and virtuous, in unspeakable joys; the bad and vicious, in intolerable torments, for evermore.

These are the tenets of christian doctrine, which it was engaged you should embrace and profess, when you were by baptism admitted into the communion of the church, and into covenant with God. I have but a little varied the expressions of them, that you may attend more to the sense of them, than perhaps you do when you repeat them always in the very same form of words.

The next thing promised for you was, that you should lead lives suitable to these holy doctrines, *“ keeping God’s holy will and commandments, and walking in the same all the days of your life.”* And indeed without this, your faith, however sound and sincere it may be supposed to be, will certainly stand you in no stead at the last day of judgment, nay, it will but serve to increase your condemnation. For our Saviour has declared, that *“ not every one that saith unto him Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of his father, which is in heaven ; and that the servant who knew his Lord’s will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.”*

Now, the commandments which you are to keep are easily known, being the same that God gave to Moses in Mount Sinai, which are ratified again and improved by our Saviour, as necessary to eternal life. They may be reduced to three, as respecting, 1. God ; 2. Your neighbour ; and 3. Yourself.

1. With respect to God, that firmly believing there is such a great and glorious Being, you fear him ; that is, live in a constant reverence of his unseen Majesty, knowing that he is ever present with you in private and in publick, in darkness as well as in the day light ; that his eye is ever upon you in all places, whatever you are doing, or intend, or think of, he knows it. It is further required, that you love him, which is no more than his excellencies and favours to you demand ; and that not negligently or slightly, but with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength. God requires your heart and affections, without which he will set no value upon any of your services. *My son*, says he, *give me thine heart ;* and being possessed of that, he requires that you express your love to him, *“ in worshipping him, giving him thanks, putting your whole trust in him, in honouring his holy name, and his word, and serving him truly all the days of your life.”* Let me here only remind you that this

worship

that your worship of God, must be paid by you in publick and in private; in publick, according to the opportunities offered you, and especially on his own day, set apart for religious uses; in private, you must set times for yourselves, and keep them constantly, taking care especially to begin and end the day with devotion; that your out-goings of the morning and evening, may never fail to praise him. And in honouring the name of God, you will by all means refrain from that horrible sin of profane swearing and cursing in your conversation, and it will give you the greatest uneasiness at any time, to hear others guilty of so shocking a crime. His word you will honour by reading it frequently, and attending to it when read or preached as your only sure guide to heaven, and alone capable of *making you wise to salvation*. You will shew your trust in God, when in all circumstances you resign yourselves to his disposal, and rely only upon his blessing on your honest endeavours, for obtaining the things of this life which you stand in need of.

This is your duty to God, promised in your name at baptism, to be performed not by fits and starts, on particular occasions, now and then, but in a regular, uniform course, throughout the tenor of your lives.

The next branch of the commandments respects your neighbour, that is mankind in general, and how you must demean yourselves towards your fellow-creatures: for instance, you are therein taught to love, honour, and succour your father and mother, and this they certainly deserve at your hands, in return for the pains and cares, and solicitude they have undergone on your account; together with the benefits you derive from their instructions, examples, and provisions, they have supplied in your tender years. You can no otherwise exact duty from your children hereafter, but as you pay to your parents now. Persons in authority likewise, who are your political parents, this precept commands you to obey in all lawful things, and to reverence their office for the sake of good order and quietness; and so to pay a suitable respect to all those who are placed

over

over you in the Lord, your spiritual pastors and teachers who watch for your souls, and admonish you in your christian duty ; and, in general, to behave yourself in a modest, lowly, and reverent manner towards your betters, or superiors. But above all, you are to use all means to take care to hurt no body, not even the meanest human creature, tho' ever so much in your power or dependant on your favour ; but to treat the person, the property, and reputation of every one you are concerned with, with tenderness and humanity. In all your various dealings in the world, your constant and variable rules must be *truth* and *honesty* ; to abhor a lie, and so far from stealing or defrauding, as not to allow yourselves so much as to covet or desire what belongs to another, and which you have no fair means of procuring ; trusting for a livelihood to God's blessing on your labours, and fidelity in your station, *loving your neighbour as sincerely as yourselves*, and making this your standing maxim, *to do to all men as you would they should do to you*.

Lastly, in your personal conduct, you are required to keep your bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity ; to bridle your passions, and govern your sensual appetites ; to be meek and lowly, humble, patient, and resigned ; *as strangers and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*, and by all means in your power to preserve a becoming order and regularity throughout your whole demeanour.

These are the main of the things undertaken and promised in your name at your baptism : These are the conditions, on which you were entered into covenant with God, and entitled to the invaluable privileges of the christian redemption above-mentioned.

Whether you are determined to stand to this agreement, now you are of age to answer for yourselves. Whether you think the privileges of the gospel, the redemption of your souls, the favour of God, and eternal life, worth obtaining on these terms ? You have now been asked, and desired deliberately to consider with yourselves, and then to determine as you should be

teache
in yo
ourself
wards
u are
even t
ur pow
erson,
conce
all yo
and
or a li
to all
elongs
ocurin
your
neighb
standi
d do a
quired
chastit
al app
s, and
esbly la
r power
throug
ken a
se are
coven
ileges
s agre
rselfve
spel, u
and etc
ave no
der wi
ould
be

I. Fire and water, life and death, heaven and hell, have been set before you, that you may make your choice, and stretch forth your hands to which liketh you best; that you may not hereafter complain that you have been imposed upon; that you might act in your own persons, with your eyes open, in an affair which so essentially concerns your everlasting welfare. You have been brought into the publick assembly, and are in the face of the congregation, the question has been fairly put to you by *God's* minister, the bishop, in these solemn words:

"Do you here in the presence of *God*, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptism, ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons; and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe, and to do all those things which your Godfathers and Godmothers then undertook for you?"

To this question you have all of you given your publick assent, by answering every one of you for yourself, I DO. And indeed with the highest reason, as otherwise you forfeit again the privileges of your baptism; you break your covenant with *God*, but to which now by this open and publick assent, you have as it were set your hand and seal.

And from this your own voluntary act and deed, I proceed now in the second place, to inculcate upon you the due discharge of these your most serious engagements, that you may in the end reap the benefit of them to your everlasting comfort.

II. Now, as this is a covenant between *God* and you, you are to consider that a covenant is a solemn thing in its own nature, which no man can violate without reproach. Covenant breakers are ranked by *St Paul* among the most flagrant offenders. If it be but a man's covenant, to break it is a sign of a base and treacherous spirit, unworthy any regard or confidence. A covenant breaker is avoided by all honest men, as an out-law or reproach, with whom they will have no communication.

But

But this sacred covenant is still to be more reverenced because of the supreme dignity of *Almighty God*, who condescends to be one of the contracting parties. He is not a Being to be trifled with, or with whom we may prevaricate with impunity. What he hath promised he will most certainly make good, and will not strictly require faithfulness of those with whom he hath to do. With regard to all your solemn promises to *God*, you must remember the wise man's admonition: "When thou vowest a vow to *God*, defer not to perform it: for he hath no pleasure in fools: Pay that which thou hast vowed." As by fulfilling your religious engagements, you will be entitled to all manner of blessings, so by neglecting, slighting, and breaking them, you will entail upon yourselves all those curses which are denounced in *God's* law against wicked and disobedient persons. On your keeping this covenant depends your welfare here in this life, and for ever in another. It is your all that is at stake, the one thing needful, the very end of your being made a reasonable creature; that you might by a life of virtue and holiness, be prepared to enjoy a state of happiness and glory, purchased and provided for you by our blessed Saviour. "Observe therefore and keep it and do it: for this shall be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of *God* and man." But what a shame will it be, with what pain, anguish, and remorse will it fill your hearts, should you ever go back, and turn away from your plighted vows, and turn your steps from the divine testimonies! Oh which of you can be so ungrateful and ungracious as ever to forsake *God*, who made you, who serves you, hath redeemed and sanctified you, and entered into a covenant of peace and mercy with you, sealed in the blood of his own beloved son! Oh who can desert the *God* of their life, who hath promised to prosper your going out and your coming in, to prosper your undertakings, and to deliver you in all dangers and necessities, and as if that was nothing, hath laid up for you a crown of glory, and everlasting joys, at his right hand in heaven. Think on these things, and

early beloved young christians, and resolve with *God's*
 help to be true to your trust, and to keep yourselves
 steadfast and unwavering in the covenant you have
 made. The advantages are all your own. *God Almighty*
 is no gainer by the contract, which he has made
 with you only out of his pure love and tender regard
 for your happiness. Oh then, let your own interest,
 your gratitude and repeated promises ever be upon
 your mind, and prevail with you to answer the expecta-
 tion of your heavenly father, which with your own
 oaths you have now declared to be just and reasonable;
 and such as in every account you are bound to fulfil.
 I press these things upon you with more earnestness
 at present, because of the very great importance it is
 for you to set out right, now in the beginning of
 life, before you have contracted evil habits, or sin has
 taken any deep root in you. Now is the time for you,
 more especially to tread with caution, and carefully
 consider what tract of life you enter upon; for proba-
 bly in the same tract you will continue, whether right
 or wrong, to the end of your lives: And be assured fur-
 ther, that no service is more acceptable to *God*, than
 that which we pay him in the unsullied years of youth,
 with the lively vigour of all our faculties. It is more-
 over necessary to be thus urgent with you, to take heed
 of your ways at this critical period, because of the dan-
 gers and temptations which will now most likely beset
 and assault your virtue. The time is now come, when
 you have taken life upon yourselves, and must begin
 to act your part in a world full of snares and entice-
 ments. The corruption of your own nature, and even
 the vivacity of youth, will incline you too easily to listen
 to those fatal allurements, which vice (under the false
 appearance of pleasure) will solicit you to comply with;
 and to encourage any ill-dispositions, and embolden
 you to indulge them, there will not be wanting too
 many bad examples, who will take a malicious plea-
 sure in corrupting your innocence, and drawing you
 along with them into lawless excesses. And, besides all
 these adversaries to goodness, there is moreover a sub-

til infernal spirit, who knows your weakest, most guarded quarter, and ever lieth in wait to deceive and to destroy. On all these accounts, you have need your utmost caution and vigilance, and the firmest resolution too, to stand your ground unshaken, and to maintain your post in your christian station, in the midst so many and great dangers.

Nay, insufficient after all, and altogether vain, were all your own endeavours prove, unless seconded and promoted, and made effectual by the all-powerful aid of divine grace; a further measure of which, it is hoped is derived upon you at your confirmation: For the Bishop earnestly and devoutly prayed to God for your behalf, and beseeched him in these affecting words: "That he would strengthen you with the Holy Ghost, the comforter, and daily increase in you his manifold gifts and graces; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and endue you with the spirit of his holy fear, now and ever, that you might continue children of God, increasing daily more and more in goodness, until you come to his everlasting kingdom." These are pious and excellent prayers in your behalf, and add a new obligation to your religious covenant, to which the Holy Ghost is thus made a party, engaging to supply your needful grace and assistance to those who in earnest desire to fulfil it.

You can never then desert a charge, in which you have so powerful an auxiliary joined with you: but with constant care and hearty endeavours, you will be sure to *work out your salvation*, since it is God that *worketh in you*, and with you *to will and to do of his good pleasure*.

1 Chron. xxviii. 8. Now therefore, to use the words of King David; "In the sight of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, I charge you to keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God, that it may be well with you, and your children after you, for ever."

Know ye, therefore, the *God* of your fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the *Lord* searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever."

III. For your further assistance, in maintaining your religious resolution, it remains now, that I conclude with a few short rules of caution and advice.

I. In the first place it will be of great use, frequently review your baptismal covenant, and recollect what is that you have so solemnly and deliberately undertaken to fulfil. The three things promised for you, and which you have now promised for yourselves, should be brought to remembrance. Compare your manners and way of life with them, and see how they agree together. Let them be the rule of your conduct by which you are to walk, and not the way of the world, the examples of the multitude. What is it to me, may I say to yourselves, how others live, or what dangerous liberties they take, what vanities they pursue, what excesses they indulge: Their sins will not excuse me, nor is their course of life a pattern for mine. I have bound myself to *God*, to renounce all wickedness, to hold fast the christian faith, and to walk in *God's* commandments. I am a soldier of *Jesus Christ*, the captain of my salvation, and am engaged to serve under his banner, in all virtuous and godly living; "not to be confirmed to this world or its wicked customs, but to be transformed in the renewing of my mind, that I may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of *God*."

Secondly, Shun an idle and slothful habit, which is not only a great sin, but exposes you to all other sins. The slothful are odious in the sight of *God* and man; they consume that for which others labour; they squander away that precious time which is allotted them for the most valuable purposes. They abuse the talents *God* has given them, and let them rust for want of exercise. They are always in the way of temptation, and ready to fall in with any

any dissolute companion that calls upon them. Having nothing to do, they are ever prone to do evil. Whilst, on the contrary, honest industry and diligence in some good employment, is not only healthful, pleasant, and profitable for this world, but keeps the mind too busy to be at leisure to listen to the lusts of vice and wickedness. Industry God has in his wisdom made generally necessary for obtaining a temporal livelihood, for getting the meat that perisheth, and it is no less necessary for securing that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.

3dly, Be very cautious what company you keep: Particularly allow yourselves no familiarity with persons of a loose and prophane disposition, who make a mock of religion, and glory in being above all the restraints which lay men under: What will shock you at first in their loose talk, will by frequent use, appear less and less horrible; and if you do not fly from such pestilential conversation, 'tis much if you are not in the end infected with it. You may as well hope to handle pitch without being defiled, as keep wicked company and preserve your own innocence. But endeavour to associate yourselves with the virtuous and religious, from whom you will be always learning something good: Their examples will confirm your good purposes, and raise an honourable emulation in running your christian race; for as *Solomon* observes, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man, and especially of a good man, his friend."

4thly, Abstain particularly, I beseech you, as you grow up, from that most dangerous and destructive of all vices, drunkenness. At present you are too young to be sensible perhaps of the charms of the bewitching cup; but you are not too young to observe the mischief it has brought on those who have been allured by them: Their health destroyed, their affairs distressed, their understandings impaired, all sense of religion extinguished; besides, an innumerable train of vices, which in their sober moments they would have no temptation, are the common effects of intemperate drinking.

Having *ing*. If you yield to this one temptation, all that I have
 hilt, on *ad* will be of no use to you. You will disregard the
 some *gest* advice of your nearest friends, and indeed become
 nt, and p *ncapable* of putting it in practice. You must be sober,
 too busy if you mean to be serious; and that one post manfully
 nd wicked defended, you will be always upon your guard to repel
 e general your adversaries from every quarter.

nd, for *g* 5**thly**, Let me here repeat another particular mention-
 is necessa *ed* above, as part of our duty to *God*; that is, never
 everlasti *venture* to take his holy name in vain. The frequency
 of this horrible sin, makes it necessary to guard you
 keep: Pa *gainst* it with the strictest care now, before you have
 persons *been* guilty of it; for *abominable* and unnatural as it
 a mock *s*, unpleasant and unprofitable too, yet where this im-
 cstraints *onious* and shameful habit has been once contracted, it is
 st in the *out* seldom seen to be reformed. They that have been
 e and lo *ng* used to swearing, become insensible when they swear:
 pestilent They lose the horror of so dreadful a crime, and almost
 e end *persuade* themselves it is no crime at all. But hear you,
 ndle pit *my* children, *God* rather than them, who has declared
 pany *at* himself a *jealous God*, and *will not hold him guiltless that*
 or to all *maketh his name in vain*; and follow not the custom of
 ous, fro *wicked* reprobates, but the direction of our blessed
 ng good *Saviour*, who says, "Swear not at all in your ordinary
 oles, an *conversacion*; but let your communication be yea
 r christi *yea, and nay nay*; for whatsoever is more than this,
 neth iron *cometh of evil, or of the evil one.*" Speak the truth
 ecially *always*, and then you will have no occasion for oaths
 to give credit to what you say, which in reality they
 u, as yo *seldom* do.

uctive *6thly*, That you may keep in the right way to hea-
 oo your *ven*, take the word of *God* for your guide, read it by
 ewitchin *day*, and meditate by night. Let no day, if you can help
 the mi *it*, pass without tincturing your minds with some of the
 n allur *divine* wisdom it contains. It is the spiritual food that
 distresse *keeps* alive a sense of religion within you. It will
 gion ex *raise* in your hearts the most awful apprehensions of his
 vices, *great* Majesty; it will display before your eyes the mer-
 no tem *cies* of your redemption thro' *Christ*, and kindle your
 e drink *affections*

affections to heavenly things. The holy patterns, and exemplary lives of pious persons you there meet with, cannot fail to awaken a spirit of zeal and emulation in your breasts, and incline you to go and do likewise. Be it then your's, as it was the praise of young *Timothy*, that "from children you knew the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation." 7thly, I shall conclude all with exhorting you to the constant use of the two great instruments of holiness or means of grace, viz. *Prayer*, and the *sacrament of the Lord's supper*.

Prayer is a correspondence between God and your souls. It is the way of conversing with the father of spirits, the author of "every good and perfect gift." Every morning when you awake to a new life, never fail to praise him by whom you live, and to implore his blessing upon you thro' the ensuing day; every evening, venture not into the helpless state of sleep, so nearly resembling death, till you have first made your peace with God, and commended yourselves devoutly to his guardianship, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth.

On solemn days, resort with cheerfulness and alacrity to the publick assemblies of the faithful, then to join with your fellow christians in the service of the sanctuary; and be sure to behave yourselves attentively and devoutly, to improve your hearts with what you hear, to renew your resolutions of a christian life, to gain new supplies of grace, and particularly to refresh your souls, when it is administered with the representative body and blood of *Christ*, our *Saviour*, in the holy eucharist,—or *Lord's supper*.

8thly, To that most solemn act of christian worship, it is the direction of our church, that "no persons shall be admitted till they have been confirmed, or are desirous of being confirmed." You have now qualified yourselves in that respect, for approaching the table of the *Lord*: You are now entitled to that high privilege: And as it is the principal means of grace, appointed by our blessed *Saviour* himself, for strengthening and refreshing our souls with all spiritual aid and comfort,

and

and deriving upon us the inestimable benefits of his
 meritorious death and passion, which it represents before
 us: On these accounts, the necessity of your condition
 must needs urge you to prepare yourselves without de-
 lay, that you may be initiated into the number of faithful
 and constant communicants. I would press no one to this
 solemn duty, till they are capable of duly considering it,
 and coming to it with a right understanding, as well as
 pious affections: But when you have attained a competent
 knowledge of this sacred ordinance, which must now
 be your serious endeavour, you are by no means to ne-
 glect it, both because you stand in immediate need of
 the grace it supplies, and because delays only produce
 delays, and so you may fall into a general disuse, and
 even total neglect of so essential a part of your christian
 duty. This, it must be lamented, is too common a case,
 and leads to coldness and indifference about all religion.
 But begin early, my young christians, and you will then
 be likely to hold on, and continue in the good way,
 walking in this, and all the commandments and ordi-
 nances of the Lord blameless. Begin now, whilst your
 hearts are yet tender, and apt to receive the happy im-
 pressions of religion. You will begin with much ad-
 vantage, whilst you have yet the pious examples of your
 parents and friends set before your eyes, to encourage
 and direct your good beginnings.
 Thus initiated, you will go on from strength to
 strength, adding grace to grace, improving day by day
 in all virtue and godliness of living, forgetting those
 things which are behind, and stretching forward to
 those things which are before. You will by God's help
 continue to advance in piety, as you advance in years;
 your good principles having taken root downward, will
 bear great fruit upward, and tho' your growth, like that of a
 tree, may not be so sudden as to be immediately per-
 ceptible to the eye, yet sure, tho' slow, it will be al-
 ways increasing; and at length lift its top to hea-
 ven: Encouraging and provoking one another to love,
 and to all good works, as those who set out together in
 the

the christian race, "until you all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of *Christ*;" and be found "meet to partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

This is the wisdom which is from above, these rules and directions; the wisdom which will never found *vain*, the true wisdom of man, his greatest ornament and highest perfection, open to all, and of attainment: The pleasure, the honour, the advantage accompanying it, will highly reward your application to it. Adorned with its graces, you will appear able in the eyes of men; you will have a never failing spring of satisfaction within your own breast; and above all, will be of approved by your father, which is in heaven: You will resemble the pattern of our blessed *Saviour* himself, who grew in this wisdom as in stature, and in favour with *God* and man; and thro' his merit and mediation, will at last be admitted into those mansions of bliss, whither he is gone before to prepare place for you.

To him therefore, brethren, I now most heartily commend you, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified by faith, which is in *Christ Jesus*: to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, three persons, but one *God*, be ascribed all honour, adoration, and praise, for ever and ever.



F I N I S.